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ABSTRACT

Two exploratory studies examined Peru's elementary reading programs. The first looked at reading curriculum, texts, and teachers; the second, at students' reading ability. In Peru performance goals are not specified for each grade by the reading curriculum nor are specific instructional materials recommended (reading is not considered a separate discipline). A reading text is compulsory only for the first grade. A comparison of the nine most often used texts (selected by a survey of 30 schools plus several bookstores in Lima) revealed that: (1) cost is a factor in choice of text; (2) only four texts come with complete instructional materials; (3) all focus heavily on learning units, with little emphasis on review or assessment; and (4) specific learning objectives in all nine are almost identical. An analysis based on a questionnaire administered to 65 randomly selected Lima teachers showed that the type of school (public or private) plays an important role in a teacher's training; that, in turn, a teacher's training affects choice of instructional methods; and that only first grade teachers consider reading an independent subject. The second study, still in progress, is using 32 students from each of three grades (grades 3-5) in three types of schools to measure reading comprehension and methods of learning. Results show significant differences based on type of school. Findings suggest that Peru's decision-makers should follow research findings in the areas of selection of textbooks, instructional design and teacher training in order for reading education to improve. (Four figures and 13 tables of data are included, and three pages of references are attached.) (MHC)

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FACTORS AFFECTING READING ACHIEVEMENT IN PERU

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PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD CATOLICA DEL PERU

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The research projects are being carried out in the city of Lima, under the academic sponsorship of the Catholic University of Nijmegen. A small part of our findings has been published in Spanish in the Revista de Psicología of the Catholic University of Perú.

The purpose of this paper is to present a description of our research work in the area of reading in Peru. This area appears as the major focus of educational concern in our country. We will be describing the beginning stages of a long term effort that was started approximately one year ago in the Psychology Section of the Catholic University of Peru. Our main interest is to gather research evidence that may help in the development of educational policies at a national level. The first part of the paper is a very brief introduction to some general characteristics of the educational situation in the country. It is followed by four different research topics which are based on Mosenthal's Contextual Pyramid (1984). The Peruvian Elementary Reading Curriculum is described and briefly analyzed; the Reading Programs come next; followed by Instructional Procedures used by teachers. Finally, research work on the reading skills of students in the upper elementary grades is also included.

Introduction

Peru is a complex country from almost any point of view. One of the areas in which this may be rather clear, especially in terms of the way it strikes -rather severely- vulnerable populations, is the educational system. Peruvian educational psychologists thus feel an urgent need to contribute to the identification, study and improvement of problem areas in the educational process our young students are exposed to.

Adequate conditions for a proper educational system are very difficult, even if we are thinking of developed countries. In Peru, among other characteristics, we have less schools than what is needed, highly populated classrooms (40-50 students per teacher), insufficient number of teachers, scarce economic resources and hardly any possibilities for small group or individualized teaching and even more for remedial programs.

The interest in reading reasearch in Peru is in an early stage. Even though there are some studies referred to reading (Sanchez 1987), these are isolated efforts. Actually, the subject has turned to be a national concern. The Ministry of Education has recently organized -Lima, January 1988- two important events concerning the teaching of reading, the purpose being to develop a "National Plan for the Development of Reading".

Our professional experience in Peru has faced us with a large number of elementary school children that do not seem able to read fluently and only decode, and even sometimes this is done poorly. Therefore, all their effort is displayed in the decoding process and their comprehension is weak. If we consider as one main goal of the teaching of reading in the elementary grades, the development of comprehension skills, it is important to master automatic reading (LaBerge & Samuels 1974).

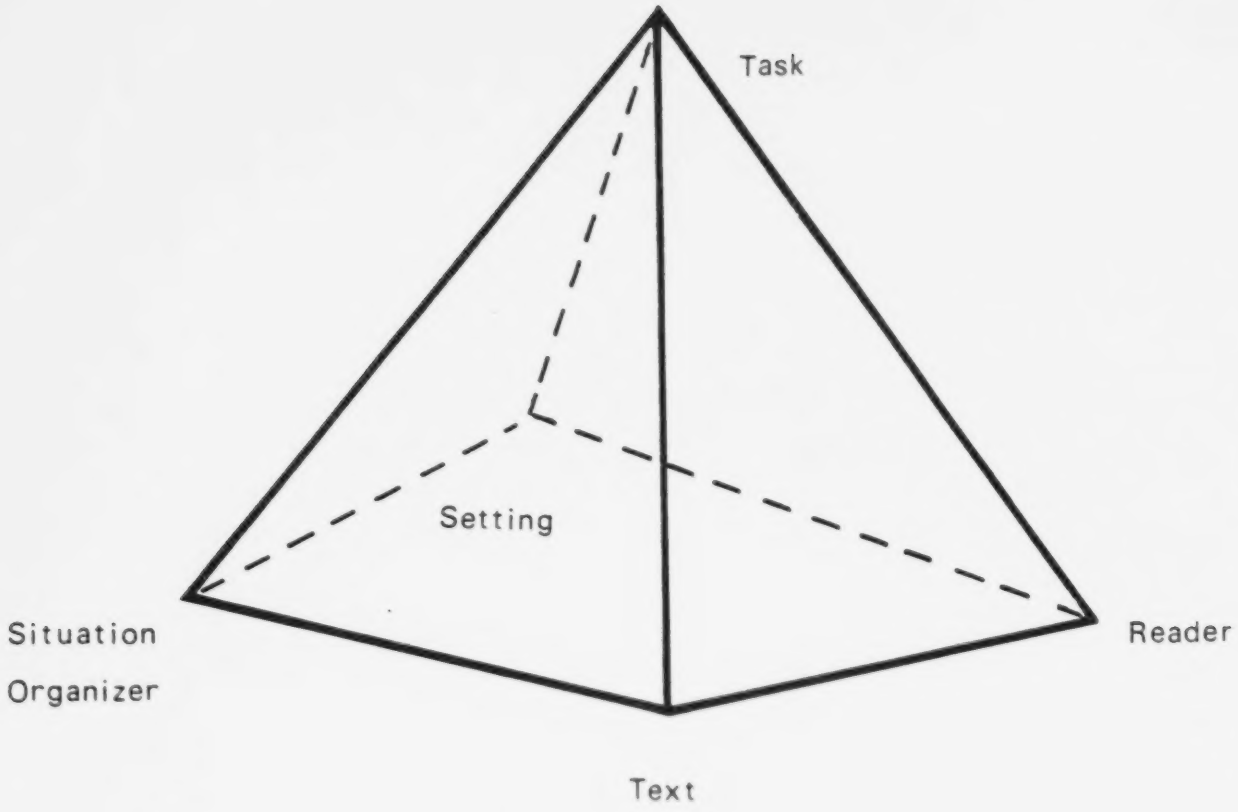
Harris and Malmquist (1973) suggest that the first step in reading research in developing countries should be the planning of a series of descriptive surveys to find out in detail what the present status is with regard to reading instruction. Within this line of concern, the present study is a preliminary and exploratory research to try to find out

what is the actual situation in the teaching of reading in Peru. Though it is widely accepted that socio-economical factors play an important role in education, we are only using for our study a psychopedagogical point of view.

Following the "problem pyramid" that Jenkins presented in 1979, Mosenthal (1984) has tried to represent the range of definitions of reading in terms of a Context Pyramid (Figure No. 1) which helps understand reading comprehension as a multicontext phenomenon. According to the author (pg. 18): "In classroom lessons, the Situation Organizer Context is represented by the teacher and pupils in the lesson. In the younger grades, the Text Context is represented by the teacher's basal reader lesson guide, the student's basal reader texts, students workbooks, and other teacher prepared stimuli such as flash cards, dittos, word charts, and blackboard exercises. The Reader Context is represented by children, representing a broad range of age, intelligence, background experience, and maturation. The Task Content is represented by a variety of instructions and procedures generally defined in the lesson outline in the teacher's basal reader manual. The Setting Context is the classroom in which students usually gather in some specified location apart from other students in order to participate in reading lesson."

Using Mosenthal's Context Pyramid we have tried to identify factors that are typical in Peru and which may have a negative influence on the way our children have been taught to read and comprehend, since the early 70's. In order to do so, we have started two different research projects. The first one deals with beginning reading and attempts to examine the Situation Organizer (teacher), the Tasks she presents and the Texts she uses. In order to understand these three aspects, the Peruvian Reading Curriculum has been examined; Reading Programs most often used have been analyzed and teachers have been administered questionnaires about their training, experience and instructional procedures. The second research project deals with the Reader Context. It includes experiments designed to measure reading level, reading comprehension, use of previous knowledge and use of context clues.

Figure No. 1
The Context Pyramid of Reading Comprehension



(From Jenkins in Monsenthal, 1984)

Peruvian Reading Curriculum

The first step in our research is the description of the Peruvian Elementary Reading Curriculum. Referring to Mosenthal's Context Pyramid, we think that it is important to present the main features of this curriculum, since it must affect the tasks that the teacher undertakes, as Situation Organizer of classroom lessons.

According to Klausmeir and Goodwin (1977), there are three ways in which instructional objectives may be formulated:

1) In global terms, in order to plan and organize a curriculum at a national level.

2) In specific terms, in order to help the personnel in districts or schools to take decisions concerning educational programs; and,

3) For the individual case, in order to help the teacher organize and plan the teaching program of one or several students.

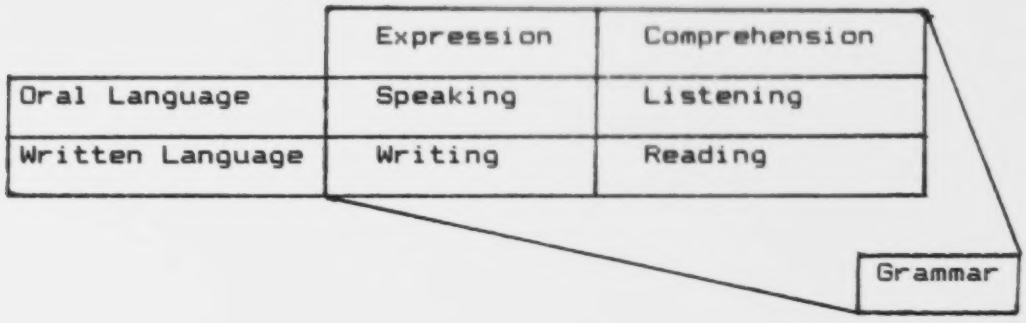
The relevance of instructional design has been stressed by Gagné and Briggs (1974). Learning must be planned, and the designed instruction must be based upon knowledge of how human beings learn. Therefore, it must take into account learning conditions that need to be met in order for the desired effects to occur. It must also include stages that are both immediate and long-range. This has a relationship with learning hierarchies that have been described as patterns of learning tasks that lead to a final skill. Task analysis plays an important role in the organization and planning of instruction.

We must mention, however, that perhaps one of the most serious problems in the field of education in Peru is that the National Curriculum of Studies is often changed. This depends upon the government on duty. In the past 25 years, at least 3 major changes have taken place (1964, 1968, 1982). At present a new plan is being developed.

We are going to describe the 1982 Reading Curriculum for the elementary grades, in order to identify which is its main goal and, the specific objectives and materials recommended for each grade. Elementary instruction in Peru is organized in six grade levels. The academic subjects for all levels

are: Language Arts, Mathematics, Historical Sciences, Natural Sciences, Art, Gymnastics and Career Orientation. Reading is included within Language Arts, where speaking, listening, writing, reading and grammar are taught. Figure No. 2 illustrates the organization of Language Arts.

Figure No. 2
Organization of Language Arts



According to the program, the learning of reading and writing includes three stages: 1) Readiness, 2) Beginning Reading and 3) Reinforcement. The first two stages are developed in first grade, while the third one takes place in the following grade levels.

The main goal of the Elementary Reading Curriculum is: "To read with understanding, both orally and silently, and to begin to develop the habit of doing selective reading".

Learning objectives, Basic Contents and Activities

First Grade

Learning Objective
- Readiness and Oral Reading in Beginning Textbooks

Basic Contents
- Short texts for initial reading
- Recognition of the phonemic value of all letters in all types of syllables
- Intonation and punctuation; recognition of "." & "¿?"

Activities
- Readiness activities
- Specific activities according to the method used
- Pronunciation and Intonation in the reading of sentences and short texts
- Answering questions about the reading texts.

Second Grade

Learning Objective
- Consolidation of oral reading of short and simple texts

Basic Contents
- Short and simple tales, songs, poems, rhymes, riddles, tongue twisters
- Punctuation; recognition of "¡!", "-" & ","

Activities
- Reading review of texts containing all the Spanish sounds in all types of syllables
- Oral reading
- Answering questions about reading texts
- Following written instructions
- Conversation about reading material

Third Grade

Learning Objective
- Oral & silent reading in texts of different length and structure

Basic Contents
- Tales, rhymes, poems, descriptions, instructions, news, advertising, dialogues
- Punctuation; recognition of ".","¿?","¡!","-" & ","

Activities
- Reading stories, fables and legends
- Reading descriptions about animals, plants and objects
- Answering questions about the reading texts
- Following written instructions
- Retelling
- Learning the alphabet
- Use of the dictionary

Fourth Grade

Learning Objective
- Oral & Silent Reading in texts of different length and structure

Basic Contents
- Tales, stories, fables, legends, news, advertising, descriptions
- Punctuation; recognition of ":" & "...."

Activities
- Reading stories, fables and legends
- Retelling
- Organizing words alphabetically
- Locating words in the dictionary
- Word meaning using context clues or dictionary
- Development of speed in reading
- Drawing about written texts

Fifth & Sixth Grades

Learning Objective
- Silent reading in texts of different length and structure

Basic Contents
- Stories, tales, descriptions, instructions, advertising, newspaper articles
- Recognition of all punctuation signs

Activities
- Reading aloud fluently, with correct intonation and pronunciation
- Reading stories, legends, tales, etc.
- Use of context clues for word meaning
- Root words
- Retelling
- Scanning for specific information
- Skimming for general ideas

In Figure No. 3 this curriculum's organization is presented.

The type of **instructional materials** recommended for each grade is almost exactly the same, except for First Grade, where a beginning reading textbook is compulsory. From Second through Sixth Grade the recommended materials are: pencil, eraser, copybook, journals & newspapers. No specific reading texts are suggested.

Comments

The first remark that can be made concerning this curriculum is that Reading in itself is not considered a subject-matter. We think that in the first grades there should be more emphasis on study subjects such as: reading, spelling and mathematics, because this will enable in upper grades a better academic achievement.

Figure N°.3

ORGANIZATION OF THE READING CURRICULUM

Learning Objectives, Basic contents and Activities

Grade	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth and Sixth
Learning Objectives	Readiness Oral Reading	Consolidation oral reading	Oral & silent reading	Oral & silent reading	Silent reading
Basic Contents	Short texts Phonemic values of letters in syllables Intonation. Punctuation [.& ?]	Short texts [tales, songs ...] Punctuation [! ; ...]	Tales, rhymes, poems etc. Punctuation [, ? ! ; ...]	Tales, stories, fables etc. Punctuation [.& ...]	Stories, tales, descriptions etc.
Activities for Reading Comprehension	Answering questions	Following written instructions Conversation about reading	Reading descriptions Retelling Learning alphabet Use of dictionary	Organizing words alphabetically Locating words Word meaning Speed Drawing	Root words Scanning Skimming

In terms of Klausmeir and Goodwin (1977) a curriculum may be defined in global and in specific terms. With regard to the Peruvian Curriculum, we may say that it is defined in global terms. A main goal is clearly stated and this is supposed to guide the instructional design, in terms of specific objectives. However, when we analyze the organization of the curriculum, it is difficult to grasp which are the specific objectives at each grade level. As it can be inferred, the program is presented from simple to more and more complex learning activities, keeping in some way a sequence. Nevertheless, we think there is no clear definition of which subskills must be mastered at each grade level, so that a student be promoted to the subsequent grade and in order to reach the main goal. In other words, a learning hierarchy cannot be identified and the specific objectives of each grade are not clearly stated in terms of performance objectives.

Due to the constant changes in the educational system, the management of instruction is difficult. In addition, these changes are undertaken for political or non-educational reasons and not necessarily based on research findings. This lack of continuity has repercussions on the different institutions responsible of organizing and planning instruction, as well as on school principals and teachers.

We think that the fact that the curriculum does not state clearly which are the performance objectives for each grade and the lack of continuity in the educational system have negative effects on the teaching of reading. In these conditions, the task that the teacher must undertake as situation organizer, is quite difficult and sometimes confusing.

The Reading Programs

Reading Programs, and in particular, beginning reading textbooks have an important influence on the chances that children will learn to read and the speed and ease of their learning to read (Beck and Block 1979). According to these authors, the type of reading program shapes the nature of the classroom reading practices, and though the implementation of a program varies with individual teachers, the content sequence and the instructional strategies specified in the teacher's guide influences teacher's classroom behavior.

According to Mosenthal, the Text Context is represented by the teacher's basal reader lesson guide, the student's texts and all the instructional materials accompanying the program. Therefore, we have considered as an important issue of our research the evaluation of the reading programs more oftenly used in our country.

In Peru, few studies concerning specific beginning reading texbooks have been undertaken (Calderón 1967; Aspicuelta 1971, 1976; Minaya 1978; Capella et al., 1982). Capella's et al. research dealt on "Coquito" that is considered the "best seller" of the beginning reading textbooks in Peru. The study identifies the deficiencies of the reading program and makes suggestions in order to improve it. Unfortunately, after all these years, the advice has not been taken into consideration and the program remains the same.

Chall (1967) classified twenty-two beginning reading programs using a certain number of variables such as completeness, structure, goals, motivation appeal, and method. Using some of these variables a study of the organization and progamming of the beginning reading textbooks in Peru was done by Thorne & Merkx (1986).

One aspect that is important in a reading program is the method on which it is based. Chall (1967) undertook an exhaustive study concerning the different methods in the teaching of reading. Her conclusions were that the code-emphasis approach helped average and below-average children to read better than the meaning-emphasis approach. The current position concerning the reading methods is "ecletic". However, most of the studies involve the reading of English (Harris and Malmquist, 1973). For Venezky (1978) most methods (phonics, linguistic, whole word) depend on letter-sound learning, the basic difference occurring in the timing of the letter-sound instruction. In languages where there is a regularity in sound-correspondences, methods which lay initial emphasis on elements of words and their sounds are supposed to produce better results, however there are no conclusive studies concerning this matter in Spanish.

The method is important, however a certain number of studies have noted that instructional design is a must in the development of reading programs (Malmquist, 1973; Gagné & Briggs, 1974; Resnick & Beck, 1976; Mommers, 1982; Barr, 1984; Trabasso, 1984). An important point of instructional design is that learning is based on hierarchies. The organization and programing of sequences is based on task

analysis, that lead to a terminal skill. Each subordinate task can be considered a prerequisite for the task above it.

Resnick & Beck (1976) have noted the importance of task analysis in the development of a theory of instruction for intellectual domains such as reading. LaBerge and Samuels' Model of Perceptual Learning Development (Samuels, 1976;1984) is an example of a hierarchical model that shows the sequence and progression of learning from distinctive features, to letters, letter clusters and on to words.

Because of the fact that there is enough evidence for asserting that reading programs play an important role in the teaching of reading, we think that exploring the characteristics of our reading programs will help identifiy some aspects of these, that could be affecting negatively reading achievement.

Reading programs may be studied along a large number of variables. For this research, we are considering some formal aspects; however finer distinctions can be made, especially with regard to content analysis.

Procedure

In order to identify which were the most commonly used textbooks in Lima, a survey was carried out in 30 public and private schools and the most important bookshops. We have gathered information concerning the characteristics, materials, the unit organization, method, goal and learning objectives of each text. The data has been organized according to the following criteria:

1. **General Characteristics.** We have considered the name of the reading program, the editorial co., country of origin, sets of books and cost.

2. **Instructional Materials.** This refers to all the material resources available for each program, that is: teacher's manual, instructions for the teacher in the textbook, readiness program, workbook or worksheets in the text and other materials as flash cards, charts, puzzles, songs, etc.

3. **Unit Organization of the Beginning Textbook.** We have noted the number of pages, as well as the number and type of units, indicating for each case if it is a learning, a reading, a review, an assesment or conversation unit.

4. Method and Main Learning Objectives for the Beginning Textbooks. We have examined in detail each reading program and the teacher's manual to determine the method, the main goal and the most important learning objectives.

Results and Discussion

Nine reading programs were identified as being used more often. The general characteristics of these programs are presented in Table No. 1. Five of the Nine programs are edited in Peru and four in Spain. Out of these three, Picaflor is especially developed for Peru and printed in Spain. As it can be seen in the table, six programs publish sets of texbooks, for first to six grade. In the case of Espejito, the program has textbooks only, for first to fourth grade. Finally we have included the cost, since we think that it plays an important role in the decision of some public schools concerning the textbook to be used. Two of the nine programs can be classified as of low cost and four of medium cost. These six programs are frequently used in public schools. Private schools use both medium and high cost textbooks, and none of low cost.

The instructional materials are presented in Table No. 2. There are only four programs that count with complete instructional materials (Coquito, Micho, Picaflor and Sorpresas). Only four programs include a teachers's guide, six have instructions for the teacher in the same textbook and one brings neither manual, nor instructions. Readiness programs are included in six programs. Workbooks or worksheets are included in eight of the reading programs and additonal instructional material in six cases. There is one program that does not include any instructional materials. This program is edited in Spain; if additional material is included, it is not available in Peru and, in the reading textbook it is not mentioned.

In relation to the distribution of units along the beginning reading textbook a common pattern has been noticed. As it can be expected, the main emphasis is given to learning units. In each of these units, a new sy'lable sound correspondence is presented. Words and sentences are included for the child to read. Secondly there are units related with the reading of short texts. In general these are included at the end of the text and the goal is the reinforcement of the learning units. With regard to review units, three programs give some emphasis to this aspect and

Table No. 1
General Characteristics of the Reading Programs

	Reading Programs								
Name	Coquito	Despertar	Espejito	Lalo	Micho	Silabario	Picaflor	Sendero	Sorpresas
Editorial Company	San Francisco	Codice	Escuela Nueva	Colegio L.Prado	Bruño	Susaeta	Educacion Santillana	Educacion Santillana	Brasa
Country	Peru	Spain	Peru	Peru	Peru	Spain	Spain	Spain	Peru
Sets	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	
Cost	Low	High	Low	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	High	Medium

Table No. 2
Instructional Materials for Beginning Reading Textbooks

R.P.	Coquito	Despertar	Espejito	Lalo	Micho	Silabario	Picaflor	Sendero	Sorpresas
Teacher's Manual	x				x		x		x
Instructions on book	x	x	x	x	x			x	
Readiness Program	x			x	x		x	x	x
Workbook or Worksheets	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Other materials	x			x	x		x		x

the rest hardly takes it into consideration. Finally assessment units are included in five cases. However, in two cases there is only one assessment unit. Lalo is the only program that stresses assessment. Results concerning this unit organization are presented in Table No. 3.

The data with regard to the method, main goal and learning objectives is presented in Table No. 4. This information, depending of each case, has been inferred from the analysis of the reading textbook, the teacher's guide and the instructions for the teacher in the same book. In all cases, the information proposed to the teacher is limited and little or no information is given concerning the program's rationale. Inizan (1978) reports the same deficiency in the French teacher's guides.

Regarding the method, five reading programs can be classified as ecletic, because they use strategies of both, analytic and synthetic methods. Three are synthetic, based on the learning of syllables and one is onomatopaeic.

As it has been mentioned before, the instructional design plays an important role in the developement of reading programs. According to Gagné & Briggs (1974) the best way to design instruction is to work backwords from the outcomes it is expected to have. Therefore, the definition of a main goal is important to identify the human capabilities that lead to this goal. Five of the nine programs define a main goal. In the other cases, no definition is explicitly stated.

The development of a learning hierarchy is based of the expected goal. In the case of elementary reading teaching, a definition of what the program developer understands by reading must be included. On this topic, we can make reference to Perfetti (1984), who has summarized the different approaches on reading in two types of definitions:

- Definition 1: "Reading is thinking guided by print"

- Definition 2: "Reading is the translation of written elements into language".

The first definition considers reading as a higher mental ability in which print plays a role. The meaning-emphasis approaches to teaching reading reflect this type of definition. The second is considered a decoding definition.

Table No. 3
Unit Organization of the Beginning Reading Textbooks

R.P.	Coquito	Despertar	Espejito	Lalo	Micho	Silabario	Picaflor	Sendero	Sorpresas
No. Pages	112	94	126	304	159	96	94	164	128
No. Units	69	45	66	69	80	53	41	40	56
Learning	44	31	47	45	61	42	34	35	31
Short Texts	15	8	9	8	4	8	4	4	12
Review	-	1	10	6	15	3	2	-	13
Assessment	5	5	-	10	-	-	1	1	-
Conversation	5	-	-		-	-	-	-	-

Table No. 4
Method and Learning Objectives for the Beginning Reading Texbooks

Textbook	Method	Main Goal	Specific Learning Objectives
Coquito	Analytic Synthetic	"Learning to read, as well to think, understand and create"	-Readiness -Vowels -Consonants in syllables CV,VC,CVC,CVV -Consonants in complex syllables CCV,CCVC,CVVC
Despertar	Syllabic	"Learning to read and write."	-Readiness -Vowels -Consonants
Espejito	Analytic Synthetic	*	-Vowels -Consonants in syllables CV,VC,CVC -Consonants in complex syllables CCV,CCVC,CVVC -The alphabet -Reading of short texts
Lalo	Synthetic Analytic	"Developing simultaneously reading and writing"	-Vowels -Consonants in CV syllables -Consonants in VC syllables -Consonants in CCV syllables
Micho	Onomato-paeic	*	-Vowels -Consonants in syllabes CV,VC,CVC -Consonants in complex syllables -Reading comprehension of short texts
Nuevo Silabario	Analytic Synthetic	*	-Vowels -Consonants in syllables CV,VC -Consonants in complex syllables CCV
Picaflor	Synthetic Syllabic	"Learning of reading and writing in script and cursive letters"	-Vowels -All types of syllables according to degree of difficulty -Word composition -Reading of short texts
Sendero	Synthetic Syllabic	*	-Vowels -Syllables (CV) with consonants of minor phonetic difficulty -Syllables (VC) with consonants of greater phonetic difficulty -Complex syllables
Sorpresas	Analytic Synthetic	"Learning a symbolic system of signs and comprehension of written language"	-Vowels -Regular consonants in CV syllables -Irregular consonstas in CV syllables -Double consonants -Consonants in complex syllables

* not mentionned

The code-emphasis approaches reflect this type of definition. The first one applies more to skilled reading, while the second to beginning reading. We must point out that the only way of accessing skilled comprehension processes is by having skilled decoding processes.

When the main goals of Coquito, Despertar, Lalo and Picaflor are examined, we find it is only mentioned that the child must "learn to read" or "develop reading", but nothing is said about what is understood by reading. In other words, no theoretical background is indicated. The only program that refers to a goal that can be included in the second definition is Sorpresas.

Though three methodological approaches have been identified, the specific learning objectives in all reading programs represent almost the same configuration. In all cases the importance of the syllable in the learning of reading is stressed and nothing is mentioned with regard to sight vocabulary or word identification strategies, which are basic tactics in methods which emphasize meaning from the beginning. In the definition of objectives, the most important rule seems to be the degree of difficulty of the syllable. The phonemic value of consonants or the graphic characteristics do not seem to have been taken into consideration. Spanish has, for example, few irregular consonants (c,g,r), a few double letters (ch,ll,rr & ñ) and one silent consonant (h). The only two programs that mention the phonemic value of consonants are Sendero and Sorpresas.

Activities are usually mentioned in global terms for all learning units. In some cases, an example of detailed activities for a typical lesson is presented. As it can be inferred from Table No. 3 that refers to the unit organization of the beginning reading textbooks, nearly no activities are mentioned for reading understanding, review or assessment.

The last point concerning the reading programs is if they can be classifed as basal reader series. According to Otto et al. (1984) the typical series not only structures a total curriculum for teaching reading in kindergarten through sixth or eight grade, but also provides all of the materials -readers, tests, workbooks, and reinforcement activities- needed for planning and carrying out instruction. If we

consider this characterization of the basal reader system, none of the reading programs fulfill theses conditions, even if sets of textbooks are included from first through sixth grade.

From this analysis it can be inferred that reading programs in Peru are severely incomplete and do not fulfill requirements necessary for a successful teaching of reading. The development of reading programs in Peru is thus an urgent need; and, we are sure it will help enhance the teaching of reading.

The Teacher

The preparation and training of teachers is a world wide problem, and Peru is not an exception. Robinson (1973) in a study sponsored by UNESCO on the teaching of reading, reports that there are two main reasons for this; the shortage of qualified teachers, and the quality and relevance of teacher-training programs.

The important role that a teacher plays in the learning of reading has been demonstrated in numerous studies. High achievement seems to correlate positively with academic emphasis (Stallings & Kaskowitz 1974, cf. Rosenshine & Stevens, 1984) and with task orientation of the school principal (Venezky & Winfield 1979, cf. Rosenshine & Stevens 1984). Other studies reported by Rosenshine & Stevens (1984) show that there are several instructional procedures that correlate positively with reading achievement.

Based on these findings a questionnaire for elementary reading teachers was developed. The purpose was to do an exploratory study to firstly, determine if there are significative differences in instructional procedures between public and private schools. Secondly, to see if the teacher's training played an important role in the instructional practices. Finally, we wanted to explore if reading was considered an independent subject-matter, according to the grade-level.

The variables were determined according to the following criteria:

I) Type of School: 1) Public, 2) Private

II) Teacher's Background:
1) Incomplete Studies,
2) Complete Studies (without degree)
3) Bachelor's Degree,
4) Post-graduate studies

III) Grade-levels (1,2,3,4,5)

The specific instructional procedures that we have considered are:

- Reading as a subject-matter
- Decision about choice of reading textbook
- Classroom organization, large group versus small group
- Teacher's demonstration of new reading material
- Teacher-guided practice
- Calling on students
- Feedback on correct or incorrect answers
- Review frequency and modality
- Independent practice
- Frequency in learning control
- Examination content

Method

The subjects were 65 elementary school teachers selected randomly from public and private schools in Lima. The questionnaire was administered individually to each teacher, by a trained person. The distribution of the sample is presented in Table No. 5.

Table No. 5
Distribution of the Sample

Schools / Grades	Public		Private		Total
	M	F	M	F	
First	1	8	-	10	19
Second	1	6	-	7	14
Third	-	4	-	6	10
Fourth	3	3	-	5	11
Fifth	3	5	-	3	11
	8	26	-	31	65

Results and Discussion

The data was analyzed according to a bivariate analysis using a chi square. In Table No. 6 (A & B) the results according to type of school, teacher training and instructional procedures are presented.

In this analysis, type of school seems to play an important role with regard to teacher's training, decision about what reading program must be employed, the demostration of the new material, calling on students and learning control.

In Table No. 7 (A & B) results concerning teacher's training and instructional procedures are presented. Again, training seems to play an important role on some instructional practices. Calling on students, feedback, review and independent practice are affected by the teacher's background.

Table No. 6 A
Type of School and Instructional Procedures

Items	Teacher's Training	Reading Subject	Textbook Choice	Class Organiz.	Teacher Demonstr.	Teacher Guided	Calling Students
Chi Sq.	14.658	.000	34.1533	8.187	5.954	3.284	8.443
Signif.	.0021	N.S.	.0000	.0174	.050	N.S.	.037

Table No. 6 B
Type of School and Instructional Procedures

Items	Crct.Ans. Feedback	Incor. A Feedback	Review Freq.	Type of Review	Independ. Practice	Learning Control	Exam Cont.
Chi Sq.	.8299	.8633	6.333	1.169	4.126	23.090	6.619
Signif.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	.0001	N.S.

Table No. 7 A
Teacher's Training and Instructional Procedures

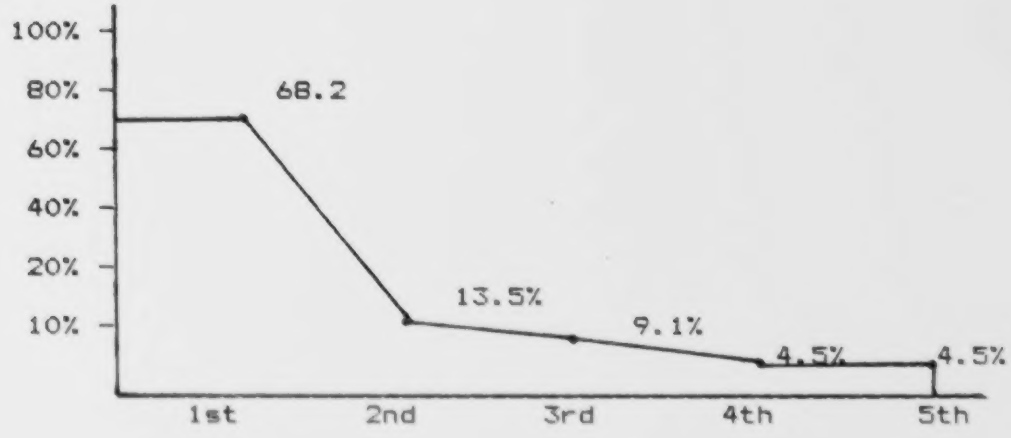
Items	Reading Subject	Textbook Choice	Class Organiz.	Teacher Demonstr.	Teacher Guided	Calling Students
Chi Sq.	0.79	11.742	14.188	3.25	4.857	16.368
Signif.	N.S	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	.05

Table No. 7 B
Teacher's Training and Instructional Procedures

Items	Crct.Ans. Feedback	Incor. A Feedback	Review Freq.	Type of Review	Independ. Practice	Learning Control	Exam Cont.
Chi Sq.	7.836	12.610	10.960	22.910	16.817	15.028	6.923
Signif.	N.S.	.0497	N.S.	0.028	0.0517	N.S.	N.S.

Even though reading is not considered as an independent subject matter in our curriculum, we were interested in determining if the teacher considered reading as an independent study matter. The statistical analysis shows a significtive difference according to grade levels (chi sq.= 25.102, p = .0000). The only grade-level in which Reading is considered independently is in First Grade. Results concerning this variable are illustrated in Figure No. 4.

Figure No. 4
Percentage of teachers per grade taking reading as a subject-matter



Another interesting finding is that ninety five percent of the teachers revealed that they do use a reading textbook, even though the Peruvian Curriculum does not indicate they should use one.

The nature of this study has been exploratory, therefore further carefully designed descriptive research must be undertaken to determine the direction of the variables; and, before any definite conclusions about instructional procedures can be made. However, the analysis of results of the data gathered through this questionnaire has made it possible to identify some of the variables that are playing an important role in the teaching of reading in Peru.

On the one hand, the type of school is quite important in determining the differences with regard to instructional procedures. The difference between public and private schools, concerning the principal's responsibility on the orientation task of the teacher is quite important. In private schools the principal selects the reading program to be used, whereas in most of the public schools, the decision lies on the teacher. The responsibility of the principal, according to Venezky & Winfield (1979, cf. Rosenshine & Stevens, 1984) correlates positively with reading achievement. The differences found in some instructional practices demonstrate that in private schools, teachers more often give a demostration of the new material and that practice is guided. Calling on students and learning control are done systematically in private schools. Rosenshine and Stevens (1984) have noted that these procedures correlate positively with reading achievement. In public schools, calling on students is done randomly and learning control, in most of the cases, is done once a month.

On the other hand, teacher training is also determining differences concerning instructional practices. Teachers with a better training show positive procedures concerning calling on students, feedback, review and independent practice. These practices are considered positively correlated with reading achievement by Rosenshine and Stevens (1984).

These findings, though not conlusive, have permited the identification of some instructional procedures that are affecting reading achievement in Peruvian schools.

The Reader Context

The urgent need of educational change in Peru is currently a shared general belief. Public opinion, parents, higher education students, secondary students, and teachers themselves, appear to agree that our Peruvian students do not leave High School with the reading skills, the study habits, and the level of knowledge they require in order to function effectively in their subsequent stages of life. On the basis of these beliefs regarding the achievement level of the individual students, a very strong feeling of dissatisfaction seems to have developed across all socioeconomic levels.

What we know about the actual reading level of our students, however, is extremely limited. In addition to this, what we know is not based on research evidence. It is based on everyday experience -both professional and personal- of comparison between the expectations and demands of our school systems in the late 50's and 60's, and those of the 80's.

There are, of course, some interesting efforts reported in Sanchez (1987) which suggest that research in the area of reading and reading comprehension with a special emphasis on understanding individual students will probably be a strong trend in our educational system's need to adapt curriculum, materials and textbooks, tasks and methods to regional characteristics.

In terms of Mosenthal's Context Pyramid, the Reader Context represents the individual student. We have included preliminary information concerning this aspect in an effort to try to understand the degree in which our students are developing reading skills.

At the Catholic University of Peru we have tried -as it may be inferred from this paper- to make reading research a first priority, and we have tried to avoid working with no theoretical base. This seems to be the problem with most previous research in the country. Part of our efforts is presently geared towards understanding our individual students in the upper elementary grades. This focus of interest has been described elsewhere (Pinzás, 1986) emphasizing the need to examine metacognitive skills.

Two beliefs have guided us in our selection of topics and research design. Our first belief is that in an environment of scarce reading materials, poorly trained teachers, extremely poor public schools, etc. our students may learn on their own how to compensate for these limitations and develop early strategies and concepts -which we may call metacognitive- which allows some of them to function effectively even at a sophisticated level.

Secondly, we thought that -again because of the economic and human resources in the area- Peruvian students actually need to develop into independent readers with adequate metacognitive skills rather early, since they cannot depend on having a trained teacher, textbooks, library, etc.

Preliminary experimental research

Three experimental research designs were developed to measure: a) reading level, reading comprehension, use of previous knowledge, use of context clues; b) perceptions of levels of difficulty and attractivenes in reading texts, and c) strategies for choice of reading materials for different purposes. We report here preliminary data from Experiment No. 1 (a).

The subjects were 16 boys and 16 girls in each grade (3 to 5) from three types of school (2x3x3) that were interviewed individually. The three types of school include what are called:

A) Experimental Private Bilingual Schools, which are better equipped, have external financial aid and are quite expensive.

B) Private Schools, which are often parochial, smaller and less affluent; and,

C) Public Schools, which are government institutions of no pay

Even though we have a variety of other types of schools, we thought these could be regarded as the three major types.

A pilot study was carried out by Pinzás (1986) and the first experiment was begun in 1987 and will shortly be finished. We have chosen to offer summary tables with results from the first two types of schools, since we are still in the process of gathering data from public schools. These tables will show the students reaction to inconsitent information in texts, which is being used to assess constructive processes (reading comprehension) and use of previous knowledge and context clues. Inconsistencies were of two types: cause-effect and spatial. To identify inconsistencies, the subjects had to use previous knowledge and context clues. The data is presented for each situation separately.

Results and Discussion

In Table No. 8 we have Sex x Type of School. The cells show how many students were able to identify inconsistent information. Reaction to causal and spatial inconsitencies are included. The figures are interesting and suggest a large difference due to type of school with the exception of Spatial/Boys/B. Differences between boys and girls do not seem to follow a pattern and appear to be under the influence of other variables. It also seems that spatial inconsistencies are more easily identified that causal ones.

Table No. 9 shows Grade x Type of School. The most interesting aspect here seems to be the progress made by private school students from third to fifth grade when working with cause-effect. The other ones may not show an equal pattern, with the possible exception of Private/ Spatial/Third to Fifth.

Table No. 10 shows Grade x Sex. It appears that girls may be better at identifying inconsistencies in third and fourth grades. The situation may change to the opposite in fifth grade.

The use of previous knowledge and context clues in Type of School by Sex is presented in Table No. 11. In experimental schools girls tend to do better; the opposite case happens in private schools. Students in all samples from private schools seem to perform less well than students from experimental schools. There may exist a difference between use of previous information and context clues in private schools only.

The same is shown for Grade x Type of School in Table No. 12. From these data, the impression that one gets is that the difference, in reading comprehension levels, among students in experimental and private schools is important.

Finally, Table No. 13 shows the same for Grade by Sex. As in other similar tables, a pattern does not seem apparent.

To this point, "type of school" appears as having the strongest association with reading comprehension and constructive processes. Experiments No. 2 and No. 3 are currently being prepared and will be administered to 25% of the students we have already interviewed and identified as "good readers". Moreover, we shall be collecting data from public schools which will be included in these tables to run analysis which will allow us to identify statistically levels of significance of the differences we have pointed out here.

Table No. 8
Identification of Inconsistencies Causal and Spatial
School x Sex

School	Causal		Spatial		Subtotals
Sex	M	F	M	F	
A	34	54	55	64	207
B	29	20	40	35	124
Subtotals	63	74	95	99	

Table No. 9
Identification of Inconsistencies Causal and Spatial
Grade x Type of School

Grade	Causal		Spatial		Subtotals
School	A	B	A	B	
3rd	25	9	45	20	99
4th	35	17	33	26	113
5th	28	23	39	29	119
Subtotals	88	49	119	75	

Table No. 10
Identification of Inconsistencies Causal and Spatial
Grade x Sex

Grade	Causal		Spatial		Subtotals
Sex	M	F	M	F	
3rd	17	17	30	35	99
4th	23	29	26	35	113
5th	23	28	39	29	119
Subtotals	63	74	95	99	

Table No. 11
Identification of Inconsistencies
Previous Knowledge and Context Clues

School x Sex

School	Previous Knowledge		Contex Clues		Subtotals
Sex	M	F	M	F	
A	44	53	45	65	207
B	38	33	31	22	124
Subtotals	82	86	76	87	

Table No. 12
Identification of Inconsistencies
Previous Knowledge and Context Clues

Grade x Type of School

Grade	Previous Knowledge		Context Clues		Subtotals
School	A	B	A	B	
3rd	34	18	36	11	99
4th	32	25	38	18	113
5th	31	28	36	24	119
Subtotals	97	71	110	53	

Table No. 13
Identification of Inconsistencies
Previous Knowledge and Context Clues

Grade x Sex

Grade	Previous Knowledge		Context Clues		Subtotals
Sex	M	F	M	F	
3rd	28	24	19	28	99
4th	24	33	25	31	113
5th	30	29	32	28	119
Subtotals	82	86	76	87	

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

This exploratory research has provided us with valuable information about the influence of variables in each of Mosenthal's contexts. Here are some of the most important factors that seem to be affecting reading achievement in Peru.

-Among the negative characteristics of our educational system and curriculum, it could be mentioned: the lack of continuity in the system, the fact that reading is not considered an independent subject-matter, and that the learning objectives per grade are not clearly stated.

-Reading programs do not fulfill the requisites to be considered basal series or suitable tools for the adequate teaching of reading from first to sixth grade.

-Teachers' training and type of school seem to play an important role in shaping differences in instructional procedures.

-Reading comprehension skills of individual students (3rd-5th grade) appear to vary in association with one variable which is type of school.

We believe future changes in our curriculum should follow research findings on relevant areas such as instructional design, with special attention to work on regional and individual differences (Boekaerts, 1978). New programs and materials should be promoted and if possible funded to lower costs and increase quality.

Teacher training in reading should be a priority in higher education institutions. In this respect, the Psychology Section of the Catholic University has already begun this task by offering seminars, and professional training and by publishing articles and papers.

Further research on the differences among types of school in different parts of the country, shall offer suggestive evidence on how do classroom situations vary.

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